Shrinking of green cover in Assam

3228. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has made any assessment or study on rapid shrinking of green cover in Assam due to population increase, town expansion, industrialization and ongoing infrastructure developmental projects;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to protect the green cover of the region; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No comprehensive assessment or study has been done on rapid shrinking of green covers in Assam due to population increase, town expansion, industrialization and ongoing infrastructure development projects. However, Forest Survey of India (FSI), under Ministry of Environment and Forests, makes biennial forest cover assessment using remote sensing technology and publishes the forest cover maps and statistics in the State of Forest Report (SFR). As per the last SFR 2005, the forest cover has shown a net decrease of 90 km^2 as compared with the previous assessment period, published in SFR 2003. This decrease has been attributed in SFR 2005 to "illicit felling in insurgency affected areas and due to shifting cultivation".

For protection of green cover, financial assistance is being provided to State/UT Governments for forest fire control and management, strengthening of infrastructure, preparation of working plans and other protection related measures under the Centrally Sponsored Integrated Forest Protection Scheme (now renamed as Intensification of Forest Management Scheme). The details of financial assistance provided by the Union Government to the Assam State during 2007-08 and 2008-09 are as under:

(i) 2007-08 Rs. 496.00 lakhs

(ii) 2008-09 Rs. 400.00 lakhs

Project lion

3229. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Gujarat Government has recently submitted a project lion to Government for protecting lions in its only home, *i.e.* Gir forests in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time-frame for approval and implementation of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) Government of Gujarat, in July 2009, has submitted a project titled– "A Plan for Consolidated Long Term Conservation of Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo*

persica) at the Greater Gir Region including the Gir PA System" for an amount of Rs. 226.08 crore. The main activities proposed under the project are:

(i) Management planning and capacity building.

(ii) Wildlife research, education and nature awareness.

(iii) Anti-poaching/protection activities.

(iv) Strengthening of infrastructure.

(v) Veterinary care.

(vi) Strengthening staff welfare activities

(vii) Habitat improvement.

(viii) Addressing man-animal conflict.

(ix) Relocation of forest dwellers including Maldharis from Gir.

(x) Eco-tourism

(xi) Over all O and M.

Such proposals are considered by the Central Government subject to the availability of funds and fulfillment of procedural requirements.

Receding of water bodies in NER

3230. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the fast receding water bodies in Assam and other parts of the North-Eastern region;

(b) how far it has affected the rain fall in the region over the last two decades; and

(c) whether any study has been made and scheme developed, to recharge the water bodies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Government has approved a programme for Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies with any outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore in the Eleventh Plan. The programmes covers all states of the country and aims at improvement of water bodies, improvement of catchments areas of tank commands, increase in storage capacity of water bodies, ground water recharge, improvement in agriculture and increased availability of drinking water. The State Governments including the North Eastern States have been requested to submit proposals under the scheme.

Bio-safety mechanism on Bt. Brinjal

3231. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of bio-safety mechanism that the Ministry has on Bt. Brinjal;

(b) whether this information is available in the public domain;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and